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# The Goals Of Speech

## President Reaches Beyond Congress

By FRANCIS X. CLINES

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WASHINGTON, May 9 — Denouncing Fidel Castro, the Cuban leader, and the Sandinistas of Nicaragua as agents of a Communist threat "at our doorstep," President Reagan reached beyond Congress tonight to try to defend his policy on Central America before the

**News** American voter.

**Analysis**

With the public registering widespread doubts in opinion polls about his policy, Mr. Reagan offered one of his carefully crafted narratives that, on one level, merely repeated his Latin American aid requests pending in Congress.

On the broader plane of election-year politics, however, the President sought to establish the threat of Communism in the hemisphere as the context for his Latin American initiatives. As is the Administration's custom, officials said the President had a problem only in communicating fully with the public, not in suffering their disapproval.

"The problem is not that the American public is opposed to his policy," one Administration politician said. "It's that they just don't understand it: Are the contras the good guys in Nicaragua? Whose side are the El Salvador guerrillas on? Who's wearing the white hats and who's got the black?"

**Gray Muddle, Critics Say**

The President's critics contend that so far Mr. Reagan has been offering a gray muddle to the public. They say his comments about Communist subversion in El Salvador clash embarrassingly with disclosures about the Central Intelligence Agency's supervision of the mining of Nicaraguan harbors.

The President sought to stamp out any doubt about such identities tonight, as he described the contras, who have been aided by United States intelligence agents, as Nicaraguan "freedom fighters," and the Salvadoran Government as presenting the United States with a moral duty to resist the "brute force" of Communism.

While the speech was similar in many ways to his previous addresses on the subject, his words tonight seemed designed to portray the problems in El Salvador and Nicaragua as part of the same phenomenon. In particular, this speech used denunciations of Mr. Castro to make the connection between the two problems.

Administration officials acknowledged that this was probably Mr. Reagan's best opportunity in this election year to salvage some standing on the Central American issue. The Salvadoran presidential vote is being counted as fresh progress just as key Congressional votes are arising on Mr. Reagan's aid requests for El Salvador and Nicaragua.

The speech was undertaken after considerable internal debate in the Administration over whether another Presidential attempt was worth the political risks on a policy that has been causing Mr. Reagan increasing trouble in public opinion polls. Only one of three Americans supported his policy two weeks ago, before the Salvadoran election, according to the latest New York Times/CBS News poll.

And nearly half said they feared that the President's policy could lead the United States into war in Central America.

Administration officials deny that there has been any contagion in the public mind from the President's policy in Lebanon, in which Mr. Reagan also portrayed East-West stakes and in which more than 260 American servicemen were killed before he retreated. The President did not mention Lebanon, as he once did, as a focus of a Soviet threat worthy of the nation's resistance.

One political official, focusing on domestic implications, was reminded that the President had failed to move the public deeply with his past warnings in speeches about the United States' eventually having to harbor hordes of Latin American refugees if it failed to face up more directly to leftist subversion.

**Texas Role in Election**

"I would point out that the Southern states have a better understanding of this threat," the official responded, looking beyond nationwide polls to Texas's crucial role in the fall election.

He noted that even before the President's speech tonight, key Democrats such as Jim Wright of Texas, the House majority leader, were hailing the Salvadoran election as proof that a full measure of United States aid must be extended. "Is Mondale going to say anything less this fall?" the Reagan official asked. "Would he let El Salvador bleed?"

**The Speaker of the House, Thomas P. O'Neill Jr., Democrat of Massachu-**

setts, anticipated that Mr. Reagan would try to "blur," as an O'Neill aide put it, the difference between the Salvadoran aid on one hand and the covert operations in Nicaragua on the other. He called on the President to renounce further covert operations, stressing that even most Republicans condemn them. Mr. Reagan did not mention covert aid tonight.

In the view of the President's Democratic critics, Mr. Reagan's best hope for improving his standing on the Central American issue depends on his ability to ease the difficult Nicaraguan issue safely into the shadow of the Salvadoran aid question that Congress appears to find more defensible.

"This was the kind of thing Reagan did in waving the Grenada invasion flag when he was trying to defend his Lebanon policy," one Democrat said.

In formulating the President's address, Administration officials said some Reaganites wanted the President to mount a full-blown attack on Congress in the time-honored election-year mode that President Truman wielded 36 years ago. Presidential aides said this tactic was headed off, particularly with growing signs that Congress will approve aid to El Salvador, though not to Nicaraguan rebels.

Democrats agreed that the President, at a minimum, would set up a blame-saying scenario tonight for later in the election year. But they were comforted by polls that indicated that more than half the public sees the President as too quick to resort to the military in dealing with foreign countries.

"If he wants to make the public more conscious of the troubles there, fine," a House Democrat said of Mr. Reagan's latest attempt to stir the public's attention on Central America.

The President sought to head off any charges of militarism with what was for him an unusual reassurance to the public about Soviet intentions. He said that because of the Administration's nuclear arms buildup, "we can count on the prudence of the Soviet leaders" to shy from world war, but that subversion in this hemisphere was an entirely different problem.